

Sudha Murty, A Writer with Simplicity and Finesse At a glance:

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ABSTRACT

In the larger universe of Indian writing in English the contribution of Women is substantial. Indian Writers in English like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh and Anita Desai have made a mark at the global level. won worldwide acclaim for the quality of their writing and their imaginative use of English. In the firmament of writers writing in their second language the growth recently has been substantial. Sudha Murthy is perhaps unique in that she comes from a technology space which has made India famous for its IT industry. Though not a full time professional Sudha Murthy was amongst the earliest women to enter the male preserve of the IT sector. Her writing style though simple from a purely literary perspective has captured the imagination of the readers. This paper endeavours to critically review her style as a connected writer with aim to make a difference with a didactic style that leaves an indelible impression.

INTRODUCTION

Women in developing societies succeed despite the system. Often conflicted between roles at home and desire to shape their own aspirations Women have often tried to bridge the gap with élan. That is not take it away from poor women for whom work is not about aspirations but survival, their own and their children too. The work of Indian Women Writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions and are often victims of a second prejudice vis-a-vis their regional counterpart's.

Earlier, the writings of many Indian women writers depict the psychological sufferings of the frustrated homemakers. This subject may often be considered superficial compared to the depiction of the replaced and oppressed lives of women. Today, the works of Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Geetha Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapur and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English.

A major development in modern Indian fiction is the growth of feminine consciousness and sensibility as pointed out by Patricia Meyer Specks. Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity. The theme is from childhood to womanhood-developed society respecting women in general. Santha Rama Rau's 'Remember for the House,' (1956), Ruth Prawar Jhabvala's first novel 'To whom she will', 1955 and her later novel 'Heat and Dust' (1975)', Kamala Markandya's 'Two Virgins' (1994), Rama Mehta's 'Inside the Haveli' (1977), and Geeta Hariharan 'The Thousand Faces of Night (1992)'. Are some of the leading women writers writing in Indian English literature?

The image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last four decades. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring self-sacrificing women, towards conflicts, female characters searching for identity; no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. Shashi Deshpande's simple yet powerful prose reads like a grandmother's tale that pierces deep into heart and settles. At one point, the use of omniscient narration teases the reader as the speaker forces events but is not to share until time and plot unfolds it.

Ram Avtar and Dr. Pradeep Kumar Talan(2012) in their paper 'Chetan Bhagat and his Youth Approach' says that literature is the device to project human psyche in aesthetically realistic way. It delegates the writer to salve humanity from misery and melancholy. Mind is the cause of human misery. It persuades a person to weave big dreams. He spends his entire life chasing them. Samuel Richardson is regarded as the father of

English novel. His Pamela (or Virtue Rewarded, 1741) approved novel as a separate entity of English literature.

Marks of novel can be traced in Indian literature far back in the 6th century. Dandi's Dasa Kumar Charita is known as the first novel in Sanskrit. Bana Bhatta's Kadambari is another novel in Sanskrit of the 7th century. Kadambari has been acclaimed as "the mother of modern literature". Anita Singh writes on the descent of English novel into the Indian periphery: "Indian English novel is primarily a phenomenon that arose as a consequence of the colonial encounter in India. The pre-independence novels are generally monochromatic dealing with the movement against political subjugation or economic exploitation. But after the independence, new horizons opened up inviting the novelists to diversify their themes and techniques".

Chetan Bhagat has merged both highbrow and lowbrow genres into one, which is now approved as best-seller genre of the Indian English literature. He has endowed the genre with healthy humour and sanguine approach to life. Like R. K. Narayan, he does not create Malgudi village and pick up the characters from here. He chooses the personnel from the real-life metropolis. His novels go around the lives of the youth. He exactly depicts their real-life pictures and entertains all class and cadre of people. Bhagat writes about the youth and specifically for the youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr. Jabeen R. Siddiqui (IOSR-JHSS, Apr. 2015, PP 42-47 Patriarchal Dubiousness in Sudha Murthy's House Of Cards: An Overview) says that Sudha Murthy a disciplined writer, a technocrat with the most innovative and skilful mind has been highly esteemed with awards for her philanthropic and literary acquisition. She is writing in the back ground of Indian English Literature and is in the footsteps of other successful writers like Anita Desai, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Mahashweta Devi Shashi Deshpande, Narayan Sahgal, Shobhaa De, Eunice De Souza, Jhumpa Lahiri and Arundhati Roy

Acclaimed for the discernments of balance of our Indian conventions and expect more from the foreseeable future her novels are fascinating. They are understandable, unique and stimulate spiritually the readers to aspire and to calibrate their mental outlook. In the Dollar Bahu she narrates the marriage of Mridula and Sanjay and the breach of trust made by Sanjay.

The protagonist Mridula didn't expend money because she wanted to build a financially secure and harmonious future. Her husband had manipulated her completely due to her ignorance and foolishness by secretly giving lakhs of money to his mother and sister. The breach of trust made her paralysed and she was disenchanted and absconded herself. Heartless judiciousness, manipulation and power destroy a marital relationship and the house built insubstantially was dreadfully collapsed.

Sudha Murthy is a disciplined writer, a technocrat with the most innovative and skilful mind has been highly esteemed with awards for her philanthropic and literary acquisition. Her writing is based on truth, and presents a wonderful mood, touches the heart of the readers and gives immense pleasure to focus on the text. Her writing is clear and simple communicates her ideas clearly. She is a prolific writer in English and Kannada and her novels focuses on Karnataka villages and the people. She advocates feminism and gives power to her females to strike the adverse situations of their lives. Very early in life she received advice from her mentor and employer at that time who was none other than JRD Tata. He asked her to 'give back to the society what she had reciprocated from the society.

Ms. T.Sai Mamata, ELK, Asia Pacific Journals, ISBN:978-81-930411-1-6(Women in the age of Dollars, A Perception of Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu) asks are Indians preserving and valuing their own culture? It's a million dollar question hanging around every Indian. She studied the declining human values and attitudes in the modern sophisticated era. Sudha Murthy's two novels Mahashweta and Dollar Bahu make the readers to realize the importance of humanity, despite the domination of money. The two novels are set around the typical south Indian Kannada families. The mental agonies of Anupama in Mahashweta and Vinuta in Dollar Bahu makes one to feel that they are existing in their own families, but unfortunately the traumas are not identified. Sudha Murthy's brilliance in interweaving the characters makes the readers to come out of money-madness and retain their permanent human relations.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

To start with we can see the humour that laces her writing in the story “Foot in the mouth” which she calls a garrulous person Savitri as Savitri G(G for Gossip) “...before I could go the other way... she saw me and quickly caught hold of my hand... so tightly that even Superman could not have loosened the grip “. That is accompanied by a sticky note that the reader cannot miss – “Fevicol ka jod hai,tootega nahin ‘.

She has her profound moments too, like for instance in the story “Bad Help”. Some of us would not like to be told how somebody has helped us during our life and this is clear in the story “Bad Help” when she says,“ I understood that day if a person is not comfortable with the help given to him it becomes a lifelong burden for him to carry.” The title “The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk” is eloquently brought out through the story of an Odisha farmer and poignantly ends with the punch line which is quite catchy too.

She has a mastery in using direct speech in her stories. Even when she wants to know more about Chitra in “Bombay to Bangalore” ,she asks her directly, “Chitra, I have so many questions to ask you. How is work? Have you visited India? And more importantly ,have you found Mr.Right? And why did you pay my hotel bill?”.

On the ghat of the Ganges, Ganga speaks her mind very clearly when she was offered towels and soaps for people who come for a bath. “Madam, even today I don’t lock my hut. The moment you give me soaps and towels I have to keep them under lock and key.” Sudha Murthy puts down her inference of the philosophy of an aspect of life in simple words-“Money comes with expectations and spoils the delicate equilibrium of social work”. Portado sums up in the story ‘Lazy Portado’ what he thinks of his engineering friend Sudha . “Today I call you smart”. Portado who thought networking in life is most important learns his lesson that it is not so in the end.

From the book ‘Something happened on the way to Heaven’, stories like ‘Right to Refuse’ and ‘Aagneya’ liberally uses direct speeches , apart from bringing unique morals . The father – daughter conversation in the story is summed up in the line, “Dear, What happenedened ?Why did you hurt that boy?” Sobbing she replied, “Daddy, He pulled my dress”. The last line in the story the right to refuse finishes with a direct speech “The right to refuse a wrong procedure –priceless”, says the doctor.

In the story ‘Father’s reading glasses’ is completely narrated in and indirect speech .’A New Beginning ‘is remarkably told in simple ,lucid ,style and so it touches the heart of the reader when the small girl Diya is adopted by one of the sisters. Coming back to the collection “The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk”, we find the writer very Indian at heart. She is a must read for everyone who likes Indian culture as it is that which reflects mainly in her books.

In the story ‘Uncle Sam’ ,she uses a literal translation of an Indian language-“A fire cannot be extinguished with another fire. It is only water that can make a difference”;from the story ‘You should have asked me’. The usage of mere words like ‘Ettan’ ,’Aniya’ from the story ‘The Udayan Effect’ makes the story come close to one’s heart. Again she uses direct speech here, when she says “ You have made money ,Aniya. You are rich now.” Similarly the usage of words like ‘creature’ for Eunuchs and liberal use of direct speech in ‘The Dhaka Girl’,

In this collection of ‘Something Happened On The Way To Heaven’, the writer uses native Orissa Song s in the story ‘Elixir’ .The grand daughter’s reverence for her grandfather is summed up when he sings the song-

“Raha raha khyana baaspiya sakata

Dekhibi Chilika chaaru chitrapata”

Sudha Murthy through the song brings out the native voice of a farmer who wants to stare a little longer at the land that had inspired him. She surprises us with her use of teenage talk in the story ‘Acid’ from this collection by using dialogues like “Hey wanna chat?cool...listen I gotta go, my mom is here.” Very true to her characters she slips into the teenager’s mind effortlessly. Typically teenagers use of “What the f***? and “ you can’t break up with me baby”. Suddenly a reader who is used to her subtle style, is taken aback when

she puts it in a bold manner. This is also a part of her style. 'Acid' brings out narrators' edgy writing. She brings out the teenagers' world at the same time makes us understand the self respect of an acid victim.

Her stories time and again tell us that it is important to be true to oneself. In the story 'Shraddha', she does the religious ceremony of 'Shraddha' in her simple style. She conveys to her readers that the belief that is attached to 'Shraddha' - "Three generations of people, dead and gone come down to earth in the form of cow, the Sun God and God". She uses Sanskrit words like "Sartaka", "Athithi Devo Bhava" and "Dharma Yetha" very nicely so the reader understands and endears the story. Of course she explains the term for the reader by explaining the meaning in Kannada.

Lucid description is also her forte as in "The Gift of Sacrifice", she brings to the readers a historical sense through her descriptions which goes like this "...second compartment, on the right side, there was an image of man with a sword sitting on a horse and, on the left, there was a man on foot who was only carrying a stick. There was an image of a cow behind him". Readers can vividly imagine through simple descriptions and the writer drives home the point that it is important to understand one's own family history. Safia in her book review writes - "Sudha Murthy's books are pleasure to read for its simple storytelling and descriptive of the Indian Life and culture."

The idylls of the typical village life comes through. Idea of rejuvenation through elaborate description about different kinds of ponds and the sanctity of having a pond in the village is brought out beautifully through three different stories. She employs the technique of stories within a story in Ammani's condition, A Wedding Gift and Bhagirathi. All the three are very different stories but use a common thread of wanting to have a pond.

She uses a similar technique in 'A Mother's love' where she brings out the reality of mothers' love on the face of two contrasting stories. The mother chimpanzee puts the baby chimpanzee under her feet in a jar full of water to survive. But, Hirakani is true to her mother's instincts, jumps from the hill to reach home so that she can nurse her child. The contrasting stories are effectively told and she ends her stories using the words like 'Matra Hridaya', where the female reader can relate to Hirakani very well. In the collection 'Something Happened on the way to Heaven', the story of 'The Dhaka Girl' ends like as if grandmother is narrating the story to the grandchild.

In the last story in 'The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk' - "Life's secret lessons", she uses first person pronoun "I" liberally. She shares her lessons through eight different stories. They tell us eight different morals. Idiomatic expressions like "Foot in my mouth" is used very well in the story "Foot in the mouth" when she says "I knew that I would be the next target in her gossip sessions. I had put my foot in my mouth."

Even in 'Sticky Bottoms', she feels Venkat cannot stop himself from talking continuously so she calls him 'Sticky Bottoms'. Stories like 'Helping the dead', 'Genes', 'Changing India' are interesting in their own right and the narration is simple, straight forward and clear.

In 'Something Happened on the way to Heaven', The writer captures the agony of Manisha going through a fire accident in front of our eyes, in the story 'Agni Pareeksha'. She uses *italics* to convey how Manisha comes out of the entire incident in her life, when she says, "Nurture me, nurture your two sons. Your parents and your friends. You even nurtured your ex-husband when he was almost dying. Now it's time to nurture me-your soul. Love yourself". This is the voice of Manisha captured by the writer.

The collection has different kinds of stories - 'The mysterious couple' - talks about the old couple who lead an independent secluded life again told in the most simplest of language. The hardships of tribal community is brought to us in "How Jhannu Mankdia Made It Possible" - we can see descriptive passages regarding physical attributes of the tribes - I was a nine year old, delicate, little girl with long dark hair tied up in two plaits. I had inherited my mother's beautiful slanting eyes but also my father's chiseled nose and thick lips. The story 'Grandparents' Day' brings out the tactful way of dealing with cunning people in this world; also teaches pardon and forgiveness told in a beautiful way.

Her stories are for all kinds of readers . In the ‘Udayan Effect’,the usage of Malayalam language makes a Malayalam reader come close to his heart. ’Time to pack up’ and ’Train to Goonda’ville’,’What Goes Around Comes Around’ are all largely told in indirect speech and in a lucid style and has to offer something new for its readers .

CONCLUSIONS

Indian writing in English has been one of the most discussed issues especially in the light of the colonial experience but there is definitely a new wave of writers who do not have that king of historical baggage. They write from the experiences of a new India and they stand apart because of this. The rise of the India is also the rise of the urban middle class who have patronized uniquely Indian experiences and identify with a confidence that was perhaps not there earlier. The writers like Alan Sealy, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Rukun Advani, Mukul Kesavan, Anurag Mathur and Amitav Ghosh were also increasingly feted by a the new Indian media which celebrated their international success though they were not so much the influence of the past.

When we scan through Indian writing in English, starting from Ram Mohan Ray’s ,he experimented with English Language in terms of literary styles ,refinement of grammar and vocabulary. Henry Derozio had a light lyrical touch in his writing . The next major writer was Toru Dutt. She brought her personal and cultural dimensions of her experience into her writing .Toru Dutt has a very strong sense of ‘Indianness’ and it is integrated with her consciousness, her memory.

Two early twentieth century women writers are Cornelia Sorabhi and Sarojini Naidu. Sorabhi had a psychological approach to her writing whereas Sarojini Naidu does a creative use of rhetoric. Writers like Kamala Markandeya and Kamala Das adopted their own style of writing which was not as simple as Sudha Murthy. Even Shashi Deshpande restricted her writing to fears and hopes and uncertainties of an urban middle class consciousness. Arundhati Roy’s writing in English stands in a self consciously uneasy relationship to the larger story that she tries to weave.

The two books ‘The Day I Stopped drinking milk’ and ‘Something happened on the way to heaven’ are contemporary books and with a style that is very much part of the Sudha Murthy experience. The connect that the writer has to the new emerging middle class is quite valid and has taken the literary world to the bourgeois sentiments and values of a more confident English speaking audience.

Every story has something new to offer and she adopts different techniques to achieve the one aim that is a thread in all our works and that is imparting moral values. Her description creates a drama in her life and in her own words - “ The stories in the book that we have chosen from thousands we have received have affirmed to me that there is still more good than bad in the world...more love than hate”. She has a special message for women – The women of today are not looking at sympathy, pity or charity they are looking for change,...a change in the mindset and the implementation of the laws of the land...which are just and fair”.

The background of Sudha Murthy is as much a part of her writing style and literary tradition. For purists who may not see much in her writings may not be looking at it from that perspective. All said and done the elitist in the English literary world still likes the heavy duty writing stuff to categorise it as high literature. Sudha Murthy does not pretend to offer a high literature experience but clearly she wants to change the world.

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